

Rachel West
30 Poems
April 2019



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1 April 2019
Seeing Sunrise

The courthouse turns orange in the morning,
makes me feel like I'm late for school,

so childish as to have preferences
as to how the light should fall.

It is either a privilege or a curse, this hour.
The birds are getting excited. I can hear it.

It must be time. I see it.
It is a privilege.

2 April 2019
Breach

The darkness excels,
accelerates the cells.
How far will we be pushed,
how deep into the slats
where the breath of light
is transcribed
briefly thru the wall,
swaying like this
toward the center.

In this room
one hears the rain,
its language, simple,
talks often of sleep,
of passing through
the cracks in the earth.

It has been a strange season.
They say a dam broke,
like a misstep in a dance,
something dangerous and quick.

We wait in the hollow
repetition of loose-blown things,
drawn by wind,
drawn by large trucks
across the sky.

I dreamed of you again
and for once I was as still
as a rabbit, waiting. Still as faith.
Like the rain you stayed forever.

3 April 2019
Bread

Slick back like a fish,
you tap it near the gill
and it's actually paper,
crumpled and on fire,
giving off a scent like fruit
or floor polish.

Only now can I reveal
it's yeast; it is my tears;
it is something extracted
from God, a bit of His body.
Eat it quickly, for tomorrow

it won't be special anymore.
You'll have to cast the crumbs
back to the soil in despair.

4 April 2019

Like Churning Like Chopping Like Doing Something

How beautiful was the day?
The man from FEMA rushes in.
Says the rapture happened.
I'd been talking in my sleep.
Predicted it all.

Later someone from high school (not you)
comes, she's getting coffee.
She has an everyone.
I triumph with a little bon mot.
It's like A Hard Day's Night.

5 April 2019
Fluorite

I'm resting in a chunk
of fluorite.

I imagine it's like the sea,

or being put into
a file, or
a shelf
with a sliding door.

Why is it never enough?

I work hard
all morning

but there is nothing to touch,
to remember.

A rolling fog
burns off without a greeting.

Silver coins bounce
across the tile.

6 April 2019
A Spring Day Is A Simulation

It actually feels humid.

Blue foil pinwheels gleam
idly in the grass
outside the governor's mansion: someone decided
they should be there.

My hands tingle
when I'm very scared.
I'm a little surprised
they're doing it now.

(Here is a promise
to start each day as a stranger,
with all the possibility and freedom I've felt
in my most alien moments,
far away
from my own name.)

I am on the capitol lawn,
just wanting above all things
to go unnoticed.

(My every wish is granted here.)

7 April 2019
All I Have Awaited

The dog barely moved all winter.
Now he's standing in the irises.

I bought a bunch of cut flowers;
they came with a tag,
said they would open in water.

Writing, I can travel endlessly forward until I stub a toe
on the outline of a monument.

When I look back I will see
all things, suspended;
the flowers, opening.

8 April 2019
Amethyst

1

I don't carry a crystal to work
very often. I don't make jokes.
I am a joke. I am a big white horse
drinking black coffee.
I try so hard to be gentle,
to learn the language,
but I can't, I swim, I go deaf,
I get musclebound, all these things, the squat,
the lift, the soft voices of teens, the grounds
overflowing the filter, the running
water. My ears twitch and strain.
I'm swimming with my head thrust up
toward this empty space.
There would have to be two of us.
That's all I know.

2

A summoning, a random event occurs.
I had the time, so I
made this list of words and realized
none of them were magical.

3

I know the man who styles
all the baristas' hair.
He loves spiders.
I know the man who
gets his red suit jackets
in Thailand.
I know the man who
arrives each morning in a silver coupe
and drinks the same small drink.
I know the man who is now
traveling the state giving presentations
on natural disasters. He is always early,
which is to say he is always on time.
I know the man who gets older and older
and older.
I know the man who is kind.
He asked how you were; I told him
everything.

4

In my purse I zip an amethyst.
There's one single cigar in there.
A spritz bottle of water I never explain.
Someone's poems.
Once I poured coffee, a lot of coffee,
into my purse.

5

Have I mentioned I'm a horse?
You'd be surprised how well I fit in.
At home I'm more like
one of those horse suits
with two or more people inside.
We look funny lounging on the couch.
At work it's more like I'm an amethyst,
very faintly purple. Pretty simple. Low grade.
Not as hard as a diamond but certainly
hard enough to grind.

9 April 2019
Late afternoon at a bar

Peace, initiate.
I'm bringing down
the fabric of my eyes,

a nightfall,

too alert
to some distant prayer.

I never knew
any of the people
in this room.

10 April 2019
Headache Weather

There's something coming
over the crest of my head.

What could it be?
The light? The wary dragons?
The way they hold back
the curtain of the hanging storm?
Come in, come in,
elongate my skull,
unhinge my jaw
and I will finally resonate!

The song, thank god,
wasn't mine;
I had you at last
between my teeth,
between tongue and tonsure.

This is a beginning,
something to unlock.
I am pointing my own way.
I am aching with the foreknowledge
of the things I mean to change.

11 April 2019
VR Poem #1

Sign me up.
I see the man.
Immutable, solvent love.

Unwrite the invulnerable.

Swim hunger then holy.
Swim hunger then unsee.
Wring my name's amen.

12 April 2019
Untitled Exercise

I'm interested in what you say.
Translation: the flutter
of something in a tree, already gone.

I don't know what to do next.
Translation: my feet are space rocks.
I've forgotten their origin.

This is it. It's over. I give up.
Translation: I want to know what is that unseen
vestigial thing that won't come.

13 April 2019

IRL, TODAY, YESTERDAY, TOMORROW

Mirror comes up like the moon.
I don't know what to do with this punctuation.
I should restart the game and try numbers.
Doubleclick. They're always trying to kill somebody.
They wouldn't dare do it in front of my white eyes.
I should go outside.

A guy showed me his tattoo and I wondered should I make love to him
and I don't usually say it like that
but I think that's how he'd say it.
He showed me his tattoo right there near his heart and said
it goes all the way down my arm

but I used the term 'unthreatening'
to describe myself to myself.
Why am I just getting going now
when it's time to give up?
That's what I'll be asking myself
at the end

if I can't see myself as a threat.

Another guy said he'd like to go to Cheddar's
for his birthday.
The most honest I could be was like
I didn't have a good experience there
as I walked through a web of crying babies.

I mention it because this too is me?
This is for you, baby.
I want to know me, too.

I tried to cut a picture out of a dream
where I use my big strong body
to come to the defense of someone smaller.
It was a dream, though! Remember
it just was a dream. I tried

to cut it
with a knife,
but I don't even
carry one.

The dream is what comes
before the thing that actually happens.
The dream is a good dream.
The strong body is still an option.

14 April 2019
I Want To Come Back To You

I want to come back to you—
not with a list of my fears,
but with a prize,
with a sacred heart,
a flaming sword,
something too divine
to invent.

I will hold it between us
like the first fire we ever shared.

15 April 2019
Quartz

Home is
a rose
that has a kitchen.

I'm so excited
to make popcorn with you.

I'm so excited
to wash my clothes
in a quiet basin.

The mineralogy of the soul
is catalogued here. We dream
of foreign ships
loaded with gowns,

with rose and cinnamon,
politics,
witchcraft,
Old English.

This stone, it keeps
steady time.

Something may happen
we have not foreseen.

16 April 2019
Bread #2

I'm just
incredibly exhausted
for no reason
and I still baked bread
without a recipe because
I can
intuit
physics
How else do I stay
adhered to the earth's
surface? My body just
does this
so I can understand
many things
I'm just too tired to write about them

17 April 2019
Stretch (for Mom's Birthday)

I kneel, fold
my legs beneath
me in a stretch. A prayer. Moons
spin muscular orbits
in the morning sky.
I walk out

on feet bearing impressions
of the multiverse

til Nebraska noon
releases me like rain.

I go to the gym.

The ceiling is hung with glass
fixtures like jellyfish,
silent soap operas,

the news of the day.
Dark like no sky.
Silent like a cathedral.

If you decide to spend $\frac{3}{4}$ of a life
just stretching
maybe time itself will crack its joints
with a sigh of relief.

Maybe a body untwisted, unbent
can reach the most distant mountain
with one gesture.

18 April 2019
Heart

Heart like a crystal;
jagged beauty
all around; I can't even
move without being
deliciously wounded.

19 April 2019
VR Poem #2

lark mistress
smoking
full white murmur

anatomy weapon
synonym

second arm
full well
unstring

20 April 2019
open shift

leaving the church parking lot—
the moon stands silver
at the crossroad— dawn chorus.

21 April 2019
Quiero? Quise? Querré?

Our poetry
sorts us
into categories.

What do you believe
you can learn?

What love can you afford
to lose?
What category of love?
What tense?

I took over an hour
applying minimal makeup,
selecting
crackers and cheese.

Not one day this month
have I worked on my story

in this frantic
self exposure
where there is always
something easier waiting.

I am loved.

Do I believe
my soul matters more
than just one lifetime
with too much fear in the sauce?

I was loved, and I did love...

It wants to fly away, to perch in the splice
of another language, constructed from my own
partial recall, sincere
in its failures.

22 April 2019
Bread #3

I want to be at peace
when this bread is baked.
I want to be free of all history,
speculating nothing.

This bread is not referential.

Deep within the bread
is a pocket of air.
I will hide there.

My name will not find me.
My mission silent as one who follows
at the far end
of a maze.

There is no future,
no failure; I have lifted
the sun and pitched it
over the hedge.

The center of the world I have created
is just warm enough.

23 April 2019
Instant Gratification

I sat on the front step
my feet in the grit and softness
of fallen flowers.
The starling puffed out its beard
and screamed like a child.

I'm hungry.
Got a dollar?
Are you going
to Coachella?

It's easy to say I have dreams.
I'm out of touch.
I pour it all,
ashes and midden and meat,
right into your mouth.

24 April 2019
Beer O' Clock

This street
at three in the afternoon
is fragrant and ordinary.

I'm just ordinary.

My feet accept this;
their soles
greet the air
as I rest.

There goes the red trolley.
There goes the falling bloom.

Summer stumbles in
fragrant
like a beer.

25 April 2019
Drawing

I must do better.
Must invent a code
to trick myself
into faith.

Like tumbling through
a door one has unlocked.

Like drawing symbols
in the house of Nature.

26 April 2019
Enough

I already know
what it's like
to be totally enough.

I've even been
every place I could ever dream
of going, let alone
the land of the dead.

It's simple.

All is forgotten,
eternally amen'd,

everything beautiful
vanished and returned.

27 April 2019
Filing System

Don't endgame the memory!
This air is wretchedly spacious.
You are writing a poem; why deny it?

There is still
object permanence,
a strong sting, recognition
of that which you declined to codify.

The thing itself, or its perfect placement?
What's essential?

Memory is a state
of matter that can't be converted
by hand or by machine.

Poetry arises from waste
and inefficiency, an exhalation.

28 April 2019
Errands

Scheming just rhymes so bad
with screaming. Why not
enjoy both?

My body, my life,
have gone off into the weeds.
There is a famous poet here.

She says the saints
will come, in spite of you,
and change your heart,

but all I can think about
is my grocery list.

29 April 2019
Some Among Us Know

Some among us know
they need only account
for their witnesses, their acts

subject to memory, nothing more:
a delible emulsion
soaking in its acids.

I have my words,
in print.
What will I do?

Like chain link they can rattle
for miles in persistent interlocking,
but they do not hide me

nor block a single burst of weather.

30 April 2019
Poetry God

the poetry god said
your nature alone
is all I need
to rule you
all your sweet life

even if they hailed you at birth
a new priest,
a new warden,

even if you were corrupt,
or neutral, you saw
the holy visage in all things

and for love of me
you labor over the heart
I left you, without stricture
or acknowledgment

I did not feed you
yet you were full
and loved only me

that makes you a thief,
biting off hands and delivering them
to me, beauty upon beauty
line upon line

you're hopeless!
your comrades starve
and glory me still

you eat at a thousand tables
thief of a thousand families
and glory me still

your nature can only love me
though you will never know my name,
nor feel my hand, for
I grant you freedom from all that

you will do all this
for love of me; you hurry to amplify
my name, in your warlike language,

in your confusion,
in the laurels and thorns
that birthed you

you weave these stolen branches
into a wreath of victory for me

and one day I will choose a side
and hand the wreath down
to those
who sing the loudest

don't despair, you cannot fail
in service to me; I embrace
all thorns, all blooms, all bones,
all honest lies

stolen straight from the mighty nothing
I glorify you

Notes

Poetry month went pretty much without a hitch; I haven't lost any data or found any typos or embarrassing mistakes so far. I didn't change anything except to make formatting and pagination consistent and readable in the pdf.

Rachel West, 11 May 2019
Lincoln